



**A**ND I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup> And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. <sup>4</sup> And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Rev 21:1-4)

The great German composer, Richard Wagner, included a musical score to one of the most popular bridal hymns of all time in his opera entitled, *Lohengrin*. Of course the lyrics are adapted to the tune resulting in a solemn and reverent Wedding March; but the setting in *Lohengrin* is not reflective of that reverence. The music score is beautiful apart from Wagner's original application of the setting. The tune is most often titled the *Bridal Chorus*, or *Here Comes the Bride*. I find it a very moving part of the Wedding Ceremony.

The girl to be married usually is prepared for the ceremony in an area apart from the church proper and out of view of the groom. In my day, and still in many regions, it is considered improper for the groom to see the bride on the day of the wedding until she comes down the aisle "*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*" As the bridal chorus begins, all eyes are fixed on the bride as she is ushered down the aisle by her father, or a proper surrogate, dressed in white symbolizing virtue. A veil covers her face adding to the drama of mystery and hidden beauty. On this occasion, no other man is allowed the privilege to view her beauty until the groom has lifted the veil and viewed that beauty for himself. It is not the physical beauty that is of greatest importance, but the inward grace and beauty symbolized by the veil.

The Wedding Ceremony opens with the dignified and biblical proclamation of the minister in the Book of Common Prayer: *DEARLY beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony; which is an honourable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical*

*union that is betwixt Christ and his Church: which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace.*

The above proclamation is the most often quoted of any around the world in initiation of the Wedding Service. It is also a very revealing and spiritually significant opening. First of all, it tells the participants that a solemn vow is about to occur between one man and one woman in the sight of many witnesses, but especially before God Himself. Though different in nature, this demonstrates a similar solemnity to baptism since baptism signifies the union of an individual soul to the Body of Christ (which is also termed the Bride of Christ). Both are performed in the presence of witnesses, and the vow taken is irrevocable. Both Holy Baptism and Holy Wedlock are sealed in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (the Trisagion). Marriage vows are most solemn and serious and not to be taken lightly. They reflect a lifetime commitment to love and cherish one another. The Church is the second institution created by God and is therefore sacred.

In the Wedding Service the bride comes down the aisle adorned for her husband in the same way that the Bride of Christ descends as a *“bride adorned for her Husband.”* That Bride of Christ is pure and virtuous just as the prospective bride in modern weddings should be pure and virtuous in keeping herself only to her husband as long *“as they both shall live.”* The same is true of the groom. In the case of Christ, He is above reproach in purity and virtue. But the Bride (the Church) is often soiled with the impurities of the world – a thing repulsive to the Father. But her garments are made clean and unsoiled by the washing of the blood of her Groom, Jesus Christ.

It will be good to bear in mind the high esteem in which Marriage is held by God. God only initiated two institution – the first was Marriage between one man and one woman; the second was the institution of the Church - one Unity of Believers in the bonds of Marriage to One Man – the Groom, Jesus Christ.

In the Paradise of God at the Garden eastward in Eden, God created Eve from the rib of Adam. A wound was made in Adam’s side for the taking of the rib while Adam slept. While our Lord slept in death on the cross, a wound was made in His side from which flowed water and blood. Thus was the purchase and redemption of His Bride, the Church, consummated. From the days of Eden even until our own time, the sanctity of marriage existing between one man and one woman has been observed by the ancients of all cultures as well as contemporary Bible believers. God gave the man and woman whom He created after His own image and likeness the first commandment to be proclaimed by God on earth: *27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.* (Gen 1:27-28) Two men, or two women, could never obey that commandment. The evidence of nature and its DNA cannot be altered by proponents of social engineering. *21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!* (Isaiah 5:21)

God has issued a strong warning against such superficial rigging of the laws of Nature and of God: *20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!* (Isaiah 5:20) Today it seems ‘fashionable’ to scandalize all that is good and to venerate all that is wicked and evil. The face behind the veil in Marriage today may not be a beautiful face of a woman, but the ugly and sinister face of perversion. It is abomination makes a mockery of the

Church of Jesus Christ. Our Lord is masculine, and the Church is feminine in symbology. *Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. (Lev 18:22) 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:26-32)*

Do you laugh at sitcoms or dramas that make light of abominable sins of perversion? Do you take pleasure in them. The nature of the Bride of Christ cannot be perverted by social convention. Our view of marriage effects our view of Christ and His Church, and of God and His Creation Model of Eden.

We are all conceived in sin. Our blood is tainted with the deadly disease of Adam, our federal head. Since the wages of sin is death, we need to be cleansed of the leprosy of sin. We need a transfusion. We need to be born anew in Christ so that our sinful natures are changed and washed clean of our old natures. Even those who have reveled in perversion may have access to that washing of salvation: *9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:9-11)* Some of us sharing the title of the Church were once thieves, once murderers, once drunkards, once extortioners, etc.; and some were in past days effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind; but now we are washed and sanctified by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who have held their Christian profession in levity may expect the witness of truth to stand against them at the great Wedding Feast of the Lord. *"If any man can show just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace."* Beware the warning of our Lord: *21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matt 7:21-23)*